

RECOMMENDATION

CRATEROCEPHALUS FLUVIATILIS - MURRAY HARDYHEAD

The Fisheries Scientific Committee, established under Part 7A of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (the Act), has made a recommendation to list the Murray hardyhead, *Craterocephalus fluviatilis*, as an ENDANGERED SPECIES in Part 1 of Schedule 4 of the Act.

Listing of Endangered Species is provided for by Part 7A, Division 2 of the Act.

The Fisheries Scientific Committee has found that:

1. *Craterocephalus fluviatilis* (McCulloch, 1913) of the family Atherinidae is known by the common name Murray hardyhead.
2. *Craterocephalus fluviatilis* has been recorded in the lower reaches of the Murray drainage system. The species is described and figured in Ivantsoff, W. and L.E.L.M. Crowley, 1996, Family Atherinidae - Silversides or Hardyheads, in McDowall, R.M. (ed.) *Freshwater fishes of south-eastern Australia*, where details of its distribution are also given.
3. *Craterocephalus fluviatilis* is a small, moderately deep bodied fish, generally less than 72mm in length. It has a small mouth with protrusible lips and a restricted gape.
4. *Craterocephalus fluviatilis* was reported to be widespread and abundant throughout the lower reaches of the Murray drainage system. The species has suffered a serious population decline in NSW such that no populations are currently known. Despite considerable efforts by scientists over the past 20 years to collect the species in NSW waters, the last recorded museum specimen was from the 1970s.
5. *Craterocephalus fluviatilis* has the following official conservation status:
 - listed as threatened in Victoria;
 - listed as endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species; and
 - listed as 'potentially threatened' by the Australian Society for Fish Biology.
6. The causes of decline in *Craterocephalus fluviatilis* are unknown but may include:
 - habitat changes due to agricultural practices;
 - spawning failures due to cold water releases from dams;
 - predation by, and competition with, introduced species such as redfin perch and gambusia; and

- construction of barriers to migration and recolonisation such as weirs and dams without fishways.
7. In light of 4, 5, and 6 above, the Fisheries Scientific Committee is of the opinion that the numbers of *Craterocephalus fluviatilis* have been reduced to such a critical level that it is in immediate danger of extinction in NSW. Therefore the species qualifies for inclusion in Part 1 of Schedule 4 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* as an ENDANGERED SPECIES.

Dr Andrew Sanger
Chairperson
Fisheries Scientific Committee